



Fig. 25. Interpretation of gradiometer data; Block 13

**Investigations at Jackdaw Crag Field,  
Boston Spa, SE 42304632, in 2006-7 by  
Boston Spa Archaeology and Heritage Group**



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### **Preface and Summary**

This report records the results of fieldwalking surveys of Jackdaw Crag Field, Boston Spa undertaken by members of Boston Spa Archaeology and Heritage Group in 2006-7. Our aim was to follow up the aerial photograph and geophysical surveys commissioned in 2003-4, which had shown potential Iron Age and Romano-British agricultural and settlement features in the north of the field.

Previously, work had continued on the nearby Leys Lane flint site and pit-alignments for a number of years. Although a large flint assemblage had been found there, little early pottery had appeared until we excavated part of the south pit-alignment. There we found a small assemblage of Roman and native Romano-British potsherds around and above the pits. We were interested, therefore, to see whether fieldwalking the area of the geophysical survey anomalies in Jackdaw Crag Field might produce similar pottery and, if it had been a settlement site, whether it might have been the source of some of the material deposited at the south pit-alignment.

The pottery found in the fieldwalking survey, which for the purpose of this exercise ignored post-medieval material, came from two periods of activity: medieval and Romano-British. The latter group suggest the link between the two sites is a strong possibility. The pottery from both sites was examined by Blaise Vyner, whose reports are incorporated into this document.

**The field contains archaeology from prehistoric to modern times of considerable value and interest to the people of Boston Spa, but also to the wider archaeological community. Further investigation, including open-area excavation, should be undertaken in future to determine the periods or phases of settlement and agricultural activity at the Jackdaw Crag Field site, as well as the strength of potential links with the sites to the immediate west suggested in this report.**

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For information about the pit-alignment excavations, aerial photograph and geophysical surveys see:-  
*The Leys Lane Project*, Boston Spa Archaeology and Heritage Group, 2007.

*Land at Leys Lane, Boston Spa, West Yorkshire, Geophysical Survey, Report No.1237*, Archaeological Services WYAS, 2004, commissioned by BSAHG.

*Air photo mapping and interpretation of land at Leys Lane near Boston Spa, West Yorkshire*, Alison Deegan BSc MIFA, 2003, commissioned by BSAHG.

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**Boston Spa Archaeology and Heritage Group, February 2013**

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Report compiled by Malcolm Barnes

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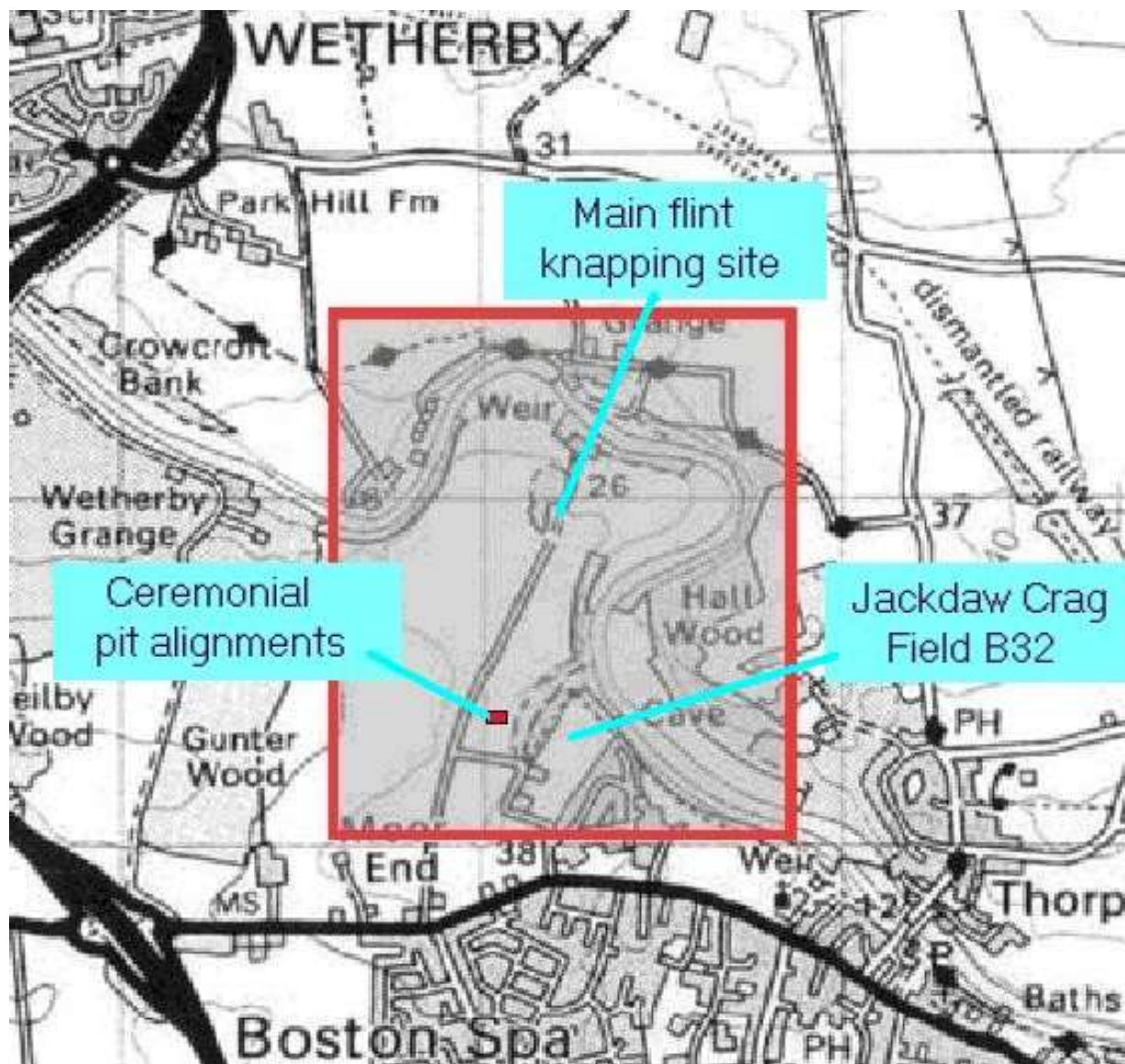
*Looking north across Jackdaw Crag Field during clear conditions for the fieldwalking survey*

### **Acknowledgements**

Farmers David, Martin and Brian Wilson for their cooperation. Don Henson for identification of flint and Blaise Vyner for the pottery. Fieldwalking team: Marianne North, Reg and Diana Clifford, Trevor Davey, Anne Wright, Stephanie Kemp, Liz Pennington, John Layfield, Gary Leah, Malcolm Barnes.

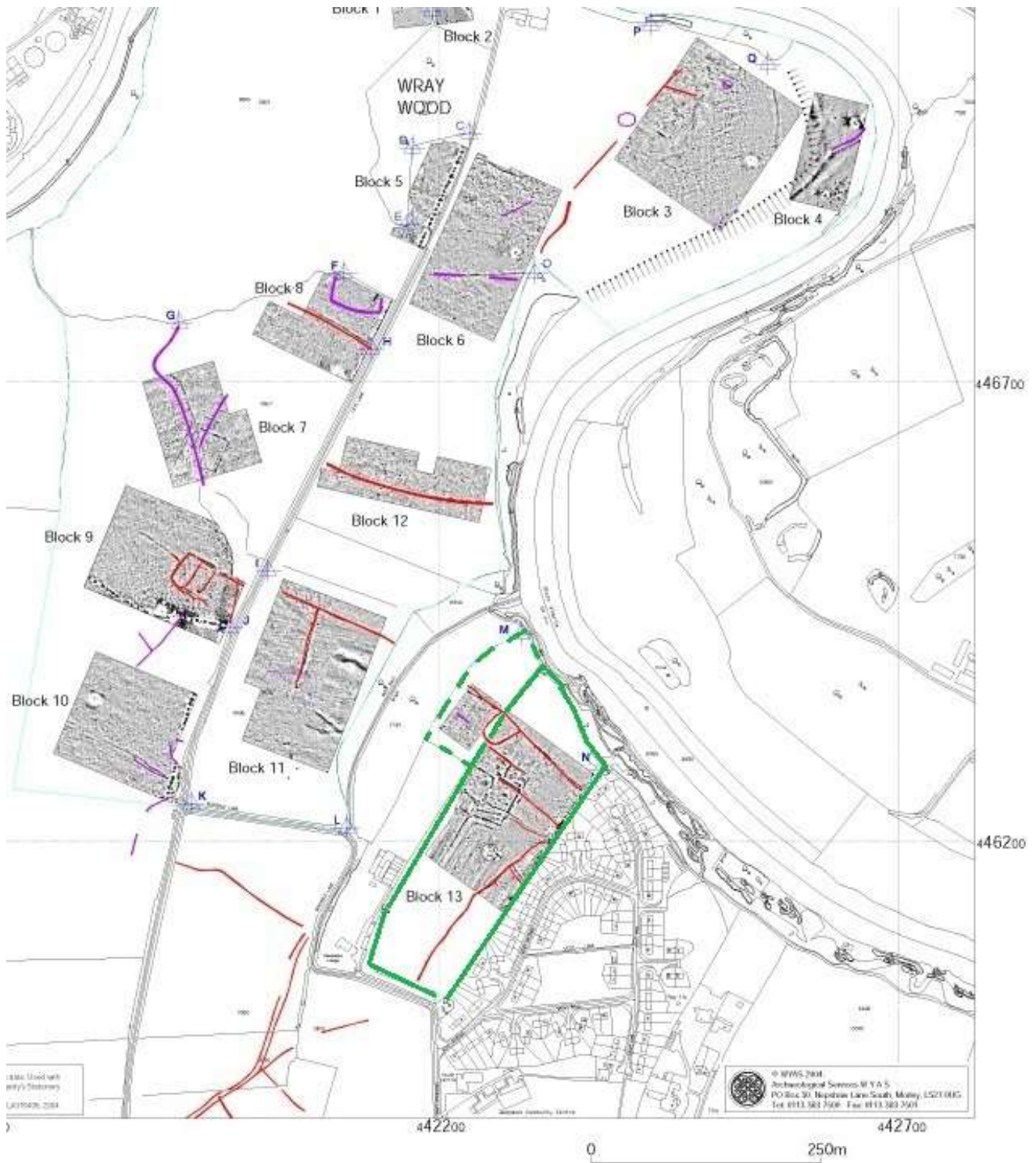
## Part 1. Location and Background

Jackdaw Crag Field lies adjacent to West End housing estate and south of Jackdaw Crag cliffs and the Riverside Path. It consists of two units: an arable field approximately 370m long by 130m wide and an area of pasture to its north west 150m long by 50m wide. The pasture was not fieldwalked but was included in the aerial and geophysical surveys.



The fields concerned contain archaeology from prehistoric to modern times of considerable interest and value. Evidence from aerial photographs in the form of crop marks, together with geophysical surveys commissioned by Boston Spa Archaeology and Heritage Group in 2003 and 2004, show that, although the fields are separated from the Leys Lane area by the narrow Deep Dale valley, they form an important part of a wider prehistoric and Romano-British landscape running east-west from beyond Leys Lane towards the modern village, established in the Iron Age or earlier and continuing into the Roman period. The geophysical survey results in the northern half of the field appear particularly interesting and valuable. The pottery found in fieldwalking suggests there may also be links between this site and material found above and around the pits in the south pit alignment (see Parts 3, 4 and 5 below).

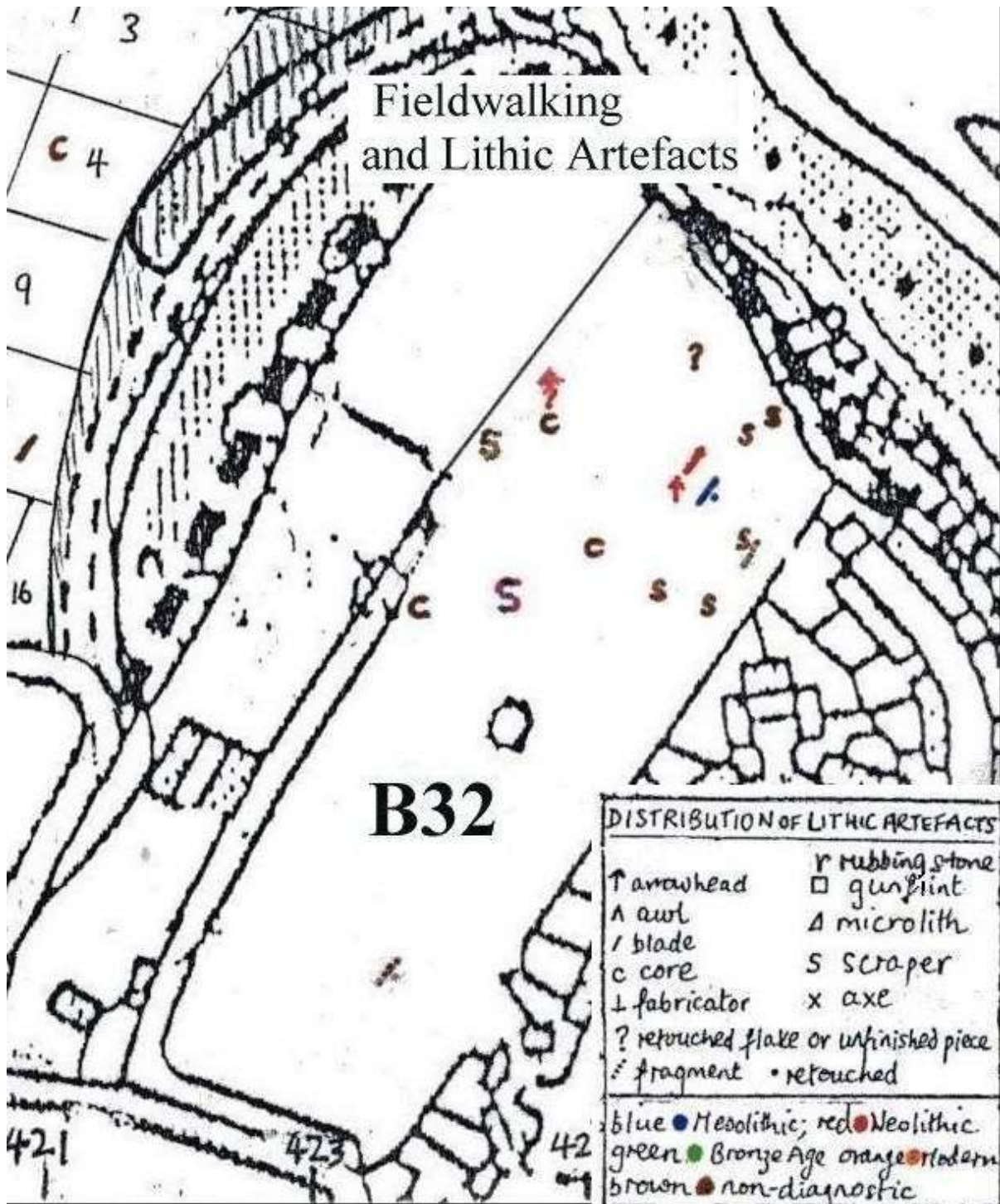
Some of the features of this early landscape can be seen on the following plan, which shows the lines of ditches, track-ways and enclosures plotted from the survey of aerial photography (coloured) and the geophysical survey (greyscale). Geophysical Survey Block 11 contains the excavated pit alignments and Block 13 the Jackdaw Crag field with agricultural enclosure ditches approaching it from the west and south west, truncated by the modern West End housing estate.



*Area of the fieldwalking survey within the solid green line, with the adjacent pasture, not surveyed, delineated by the dashed line.*

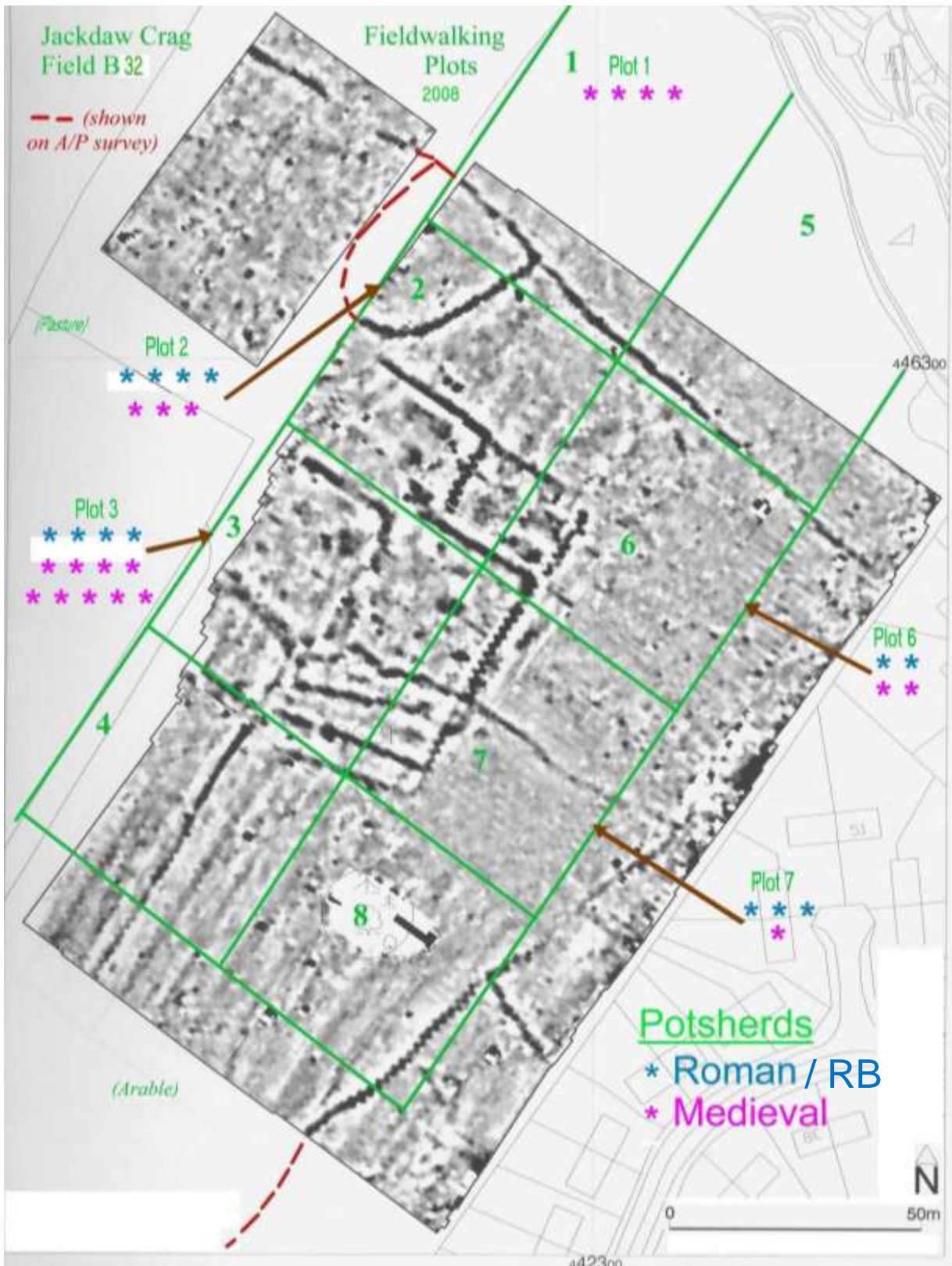
The plan also shows the lines of ditches and possible settlement features, such as pits or areas of burning, which would be worthy of careful investigation. Also visible towards the top of the plan is a D-shaped enclosure, which it has been suggested could be an Iron Age industrial feature. This was visible on aerial photographs and geophysical surveys.

Long-term use of this site is further indicated by our fieldwalking flint survey in spring 2006 in the Jackdaw Crag Field B32, when we recorded diagnostic flint tools including a mesolithic blade, a late mesolithic to early neolithic scraper, a neolithic blade and two neolithic arrowheads (one retouched). Non-diagnostic tools were also found, including three cores, five scrapers, two blades and a retouched flake. Burnt flint was also found. The positions of the flint tools are shown on the plan below. The flint finds were confined largely to the north of the arable field.



## Part 2: Fieldwalking Survey 2007

Medieval and earlier pottery was collected in spring 2007. The field was ploughed, drilled and rolled, then walked before germination took place, on three bright days after weathering for ten days of sun and light rain. Other finds were ignored. Accurate coverage of the 50m plots was achieved by walking the field lengthwise 3m apart using the seed-drill lines as a guide and completing all the marked plots. Grid lines walked by individuals were randomly cross checked by others to improve consistency.



## Fieldwalking Results

The plan above shows the number of potsherds found in each plot superimposed on the geophysical survey. A fairly small amount of pottery was found. This is partly due to the modest rain wash on the surface in the days before the survey, which our experience here shows affects results considerably. However, the pot amounts to a greater concentration in a relatively small area than we have found on the surface of other local fields, including the nearby Leys Lane site.

The scatter of pottery was found to be tightly focussed over the geophysical anomalies. Although the limits of the scatter soon became obvious, all plots were fully surveyed. None of the target pottery was found in Plots 4, 5 and 8. Furthermore, we also fieldwalked the whole of the field beyond the marked plots in the same way, but no Roman period or medieval pot was found in those plots.

It is assumed, therefore, that the pottery is associated with the geophysical anomalies visible in the northern half. The smaller adjacent pasture to the north-west was not included in the fieldwalking. The pottery is described by Blaise Vynner in Part 3 below.



*Romano-British and medieval potsherds found in the fieldwalking survey*



### **Part 3: Pottery from Boston Spa Archaeology Group Fieldwalking 2008**

#### **Blaise Vyner**

This small assemblage of pottery was examined on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007. In view of the unstratified and insubstantial nature of the collection detailed fabric descriptions have not been provided.

#### ***Roman and Romano-British pottery***

Approximately a third of this small assemblage comprises sherds which are probably of the Roman period. This includes a single sherd in Iron Age native style, several sherds of greyware and two samian sherds. This component of the assemblage probably dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

**The pottery is of interest because, taken together with other ceramic finds from the adjacent Leys Lane site, it represents a relatively significant use of pottery. West Yorkshire as a whole is notable as an area where pottery appears to have been little used in the pre-Roman Iron Age, the lack of interest in pottery continuing into the Roman period. In Yorkshire to the north and east pottery is much more frequently found on settlement sites of the late pre-Roman Iron Age and earlier Roman period. At present it is not clear whether the pottery from Boston Spa indicates that this area in the first centuries BC/AD had affinities with pottery-using tribes, or whether the distinction had become blurred by the time this material had become current.**

This pottery is likely to derive from the underlying rectilinear enclosures revealed by geophysical survey; it may be hypothesized that the curvilinear enclosure to the north of the enclosure complex is likely to be pre-Roman Iron Age in date and probably not the source of the pottery found on the topsoil surface.

#### Plot 2

- 5 Body sherd, fine orange fabric, relatively thick-walled, probably Roman.
- 6 Rim sherd from a wheel-turned jar, numerous small and medium-sized limestone grits.
- 7 Greyware body sherd.
- 8 Greyware body sherd.

#### Plot 3

- 12 Coarseware body sherd, thin-walled with dark grey surfaces, probably Roman
- 13 Coarseware body sherd, abraded, probably native style Romano-British rather than pre-Roman Iron Age
- 14 Samian, undecorated sherd
- 16 Greyware body sherd, abraded

#### Plot 6

- 28 Greyware, sherd from lower wall/base, thin-walled, probably Roman.
- 32 Samian, abraded plain sherd

#### Plot 7

- 24 Plainware, body sherd, thin-walled and hard fired, grey surfaces and fabric, perhaps Romano-British
- 35 Greyware body sherd, dark grey fabric, probably Roman rather than medieval.
- 36 Greyware body sherd

### *Medieval pottery*

The medieval sherds are all in similar sandy fabrics, and are abraded. They are likely to have been deposited with manure for the fields.

#### Plot 1

- 1,2 3 Body sherds, all abraded, in orange sandy fabrics.
- 4 Body sherd, very abraded, orange sandy fabric with remains of a glaze on the exterior surface.

#### Plot 2

- 9 Fineware body sherd, grey fabric, exterior olive green glaze.
- 10, 11 Body sherds, abraded orange sandy fabric.

#### Plot 3

15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27 Body sherds, all abraded, in orange sandy fabrics with little to distinguish them apart, save for variations in wall thickness and intensity of sand inclusions.

#### Plot 6

- 29, 30 Plainware body sherds, buff-sandy fabric, medieval

#### Plot 7

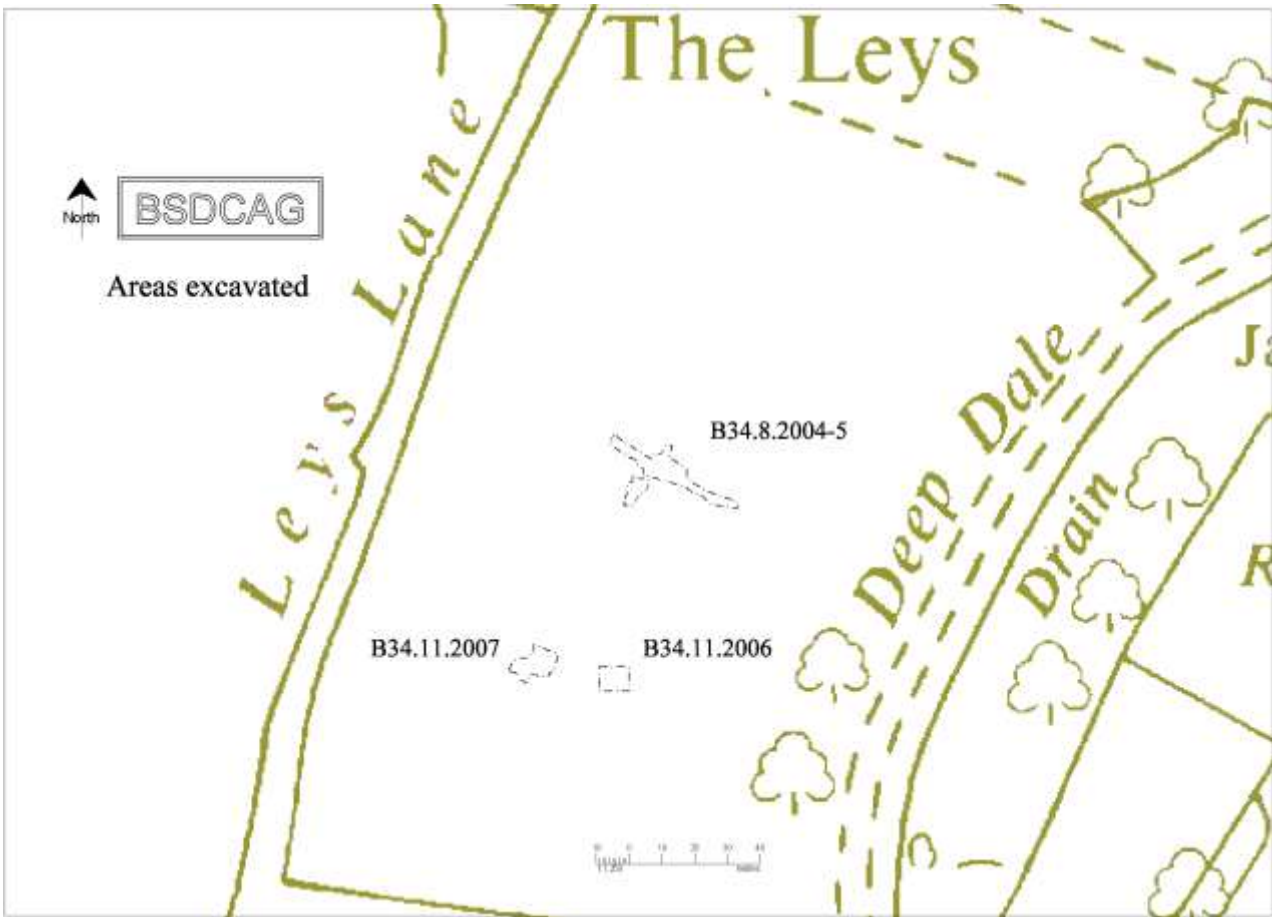
- 37 Fineware body sherd, coarse sandy fabric with orange surfaces, from a jug, since part of the handle scar is present.

### *Post-medieval/recent pottery*

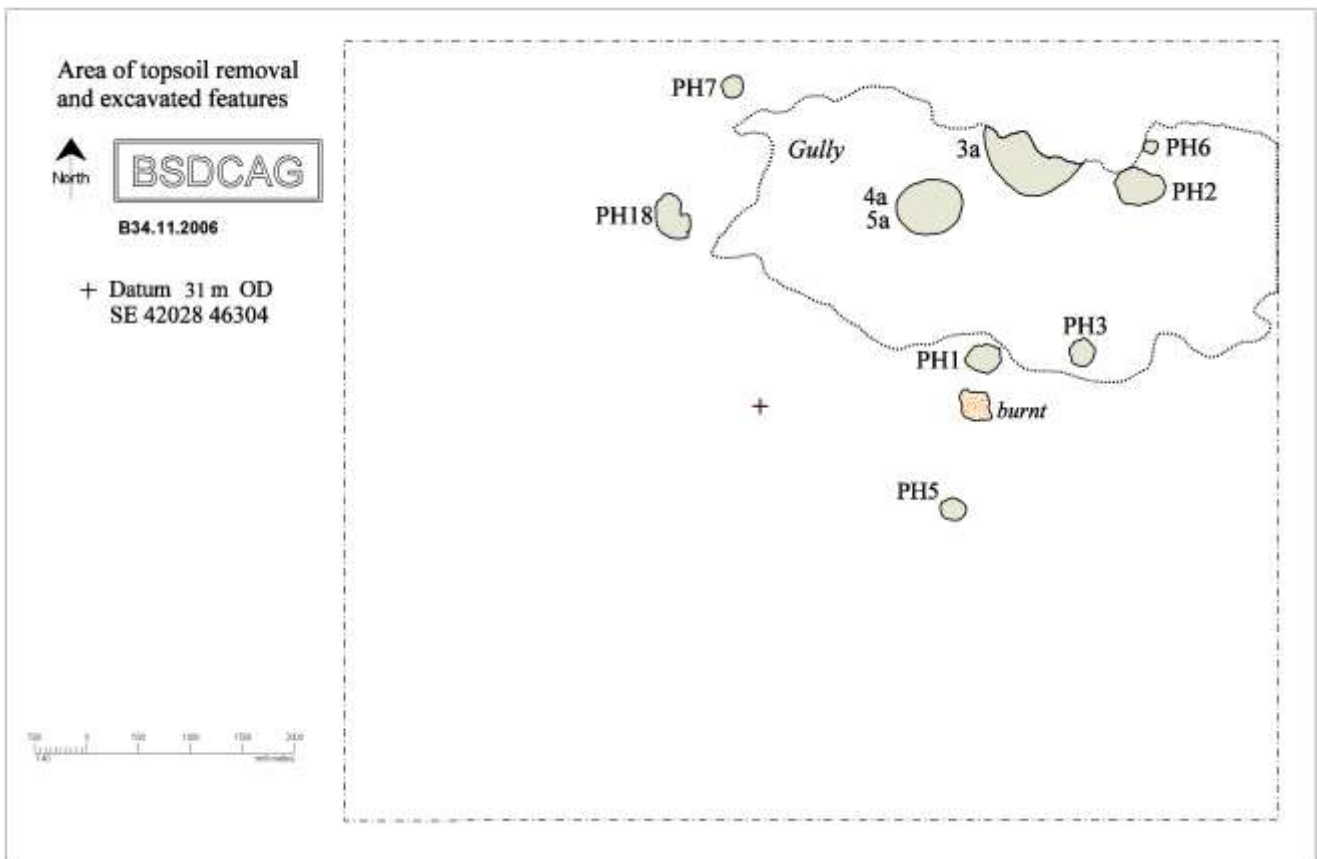
This small component of the assemblage is also likely to have arrived with manure.

#### Plot 6

- 25, 26 Earthenware, flowerpot-like sherds, probably relatively recent.
- 31 Earthenware, thick-walled, probably recent
- 33, 34 Earthenware, probably recent



*Plan of the sections of the north and south pit-alignments which were excavated*



*Plan of area of south pit alignment excavated in 2006 where pottery described below was found*



#### Part 4: Pottery from South Pit Alignment, B34 Plot 11 2006, Leys Lane, Boston Spa Blaise Vyner

This small assemblage of pottery was examined on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2006. In the fabric descriptions provided hyphenated colours indicate the variation in colour expected from poorly controlled firing conditions, the first colour being that most in evidence. Grit sizes are expressed as small (<3 mm) and medium (3-6 mm). As a general guide, grit quantities have been described in relation to the estimated average number of pieces visible per 100 mm square: occasional (1 or less), few (2), many (3 to 4) and numerous (5 or more).

##### *Romano-British coarseware*

The majority of the sherds comprise wheel-turned Romano-British coarseware which is either grey or red, a variation in colour which is a product of firing conditions, so there are a few sherds which fall between the two.

Greyware sherds: 2, 12 (from the rim of a small vessel, but damaged so that the original form is unknown), 15, 16, 27, 34, 39, 41, 42, 47, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 64, 71.

Redware sherds: 18, 20, 22, 28, 29, 35, 43, 48, 61, 77, 78, 103

Black Burnished Ware: 46 (with traces of lattice decoration), 72 (small fragment of jar rim), 37 (abraded but possible BBW).

#### Other ceramic

Sherd 17 is a fragment from a vessel which has a hard-fired dense dark grey fabric, the original wall-thickness unclear because of spalling. The sherd may be from a crucible, but its hard-fired character is perhaps more likely to derive from a domestic fire.

#### *Native-style sherds*

Three sherds of coarseware are from hand-made vessels of Iron Age or native Roman type. In view of the associated Romano-British sherds, and the longevity of the native potting traditions in this region, it is likely that these sherds are also of Romano-British date.

Sherds 31 and 76 may be from the same vessel as the fabric is very similar. Exterior surface mid-grey, interior surface dark brown-red, fabric dark grey with numerous small and many medium-sized milky quartz grits.

Sherd 74 comprises joining fragments of an abraded piece, surfaces mid-brown, fabric dark grey with numerous small quartz sands.

#### *Discussion*

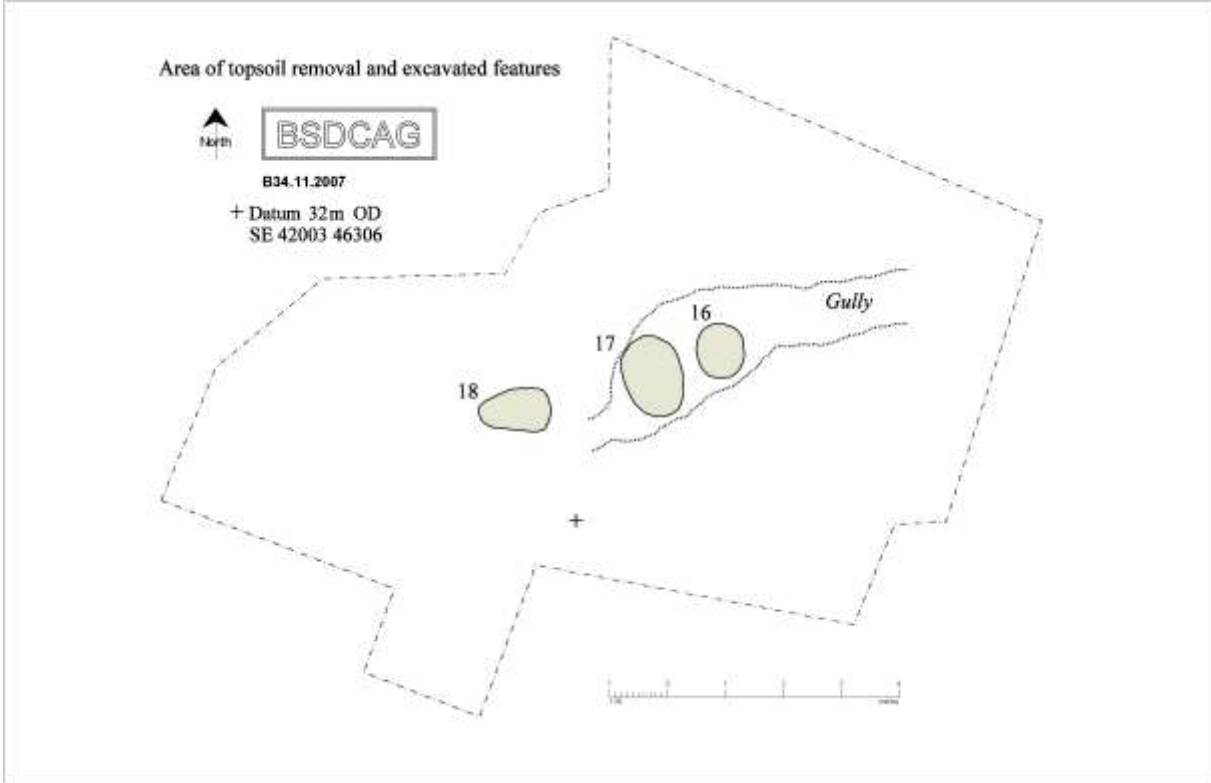
The sherds in this assemblage are notable for their abraded and damaged character, and also for the lack of diagnostic pieces. The material appears to derive from domestic contexts and the abraded nature of the sherds suggests that they could have been originated from a secondary source such as a rubbish tip or midden.

The absence of any finewares or samian is also notable, while the greywares lack the blue-ish tinge seen in Crambeck pottery products. It is thus likely that the pottery derives from local sources.

The lack of diagnostic sherds makes it difficult to establish a chronology for the assemblage. The few native-style handmade sherds are likely to be contemporary with the Romano-British material since there is nothing to suggest a distinct pre-Roman Iron Age component to the assemblage. The general character of the assemblage suggests a later third century AD chronological horizon.

Blaise Vyner, October 2006

Plan of area of south pit alignment excavated in 2007 where the pottery described below was found:



## **Part 5: Pottery from South Pit Alignment, B34 Plot 11 2007, Gully by Pit 17. Leys Lane Blaise Vyner**

This small assemblage of pottery was examined on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2007. In the fabric descriptions provided hyphenated colours indicate the variation in colour expected from poorly controlled firing conditions, the first colour being that most in evidence. Grit sizes are expressed as small (<3 mm) and medium (3-6 mm). As a general guide, grit quantities have been described in relation to the estimated average number of pieces visible per 100 mm square: occasional (1 or less), few (2), many (3 to 4) and numerous (5 or more).

### *Romano-British coarseware*

The majority of the sherds comprise wheel-turned Romano-British coarseware which is either grey or buff.

Buff coarseware sherds: small find 5 (abraded), 27 (abraded)

Grey coarseware sherds: small find 12 (rim of a small jar), 13 (body sherd from 'rusticated' beaker), 14 (probably from same vessel as 13), 15 (probably same vessel as 12)

Black Burnished Ware: small find 9 (base sherd probably from a dish).

### *Native-style sherds*

Two sherds of coarseware are from hand-made vessels of Iron Age or native Roman type. In view of the associated Romano-British sherds, and the longevity of the native potting traditions in this region, it is likely that these sherds are also of Romano-British date. A third sherd of coarseware, in a different fabric, is again likely to be of pre-Roman Iron Age or Romano-British date.

Small finds 4 and 7 have a similar fabric. Exterior surface buff-brown, interior surface dark grey, fabric dark grey with numerous small angular clear quartz grits, typical wall thickness 10 mm.

Small find 24, body sherd with fragments from a large jar, surfaces and fabric dark brown-dark grey, fabric tempered with a few small mixed grits including clear quartz, milky quartz, shell and occasional igneous chunks, typical wall thickness 10 mm.

### *Discussion*

As previously from this site, the sherds show signs of abrasion and may derive from a midden. The comments made in respect of the nature and chronology of the assemblage excavated in 2006 also hold good for this material.

Blaise Vyner  
November 2007